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REMARKS

The application has been reviewed in light of the Office Action dated August 24, 2007. Claims 1-27 were pending, with unexamined and non-elected claims 7-27 having been withdrawn by the Patent Office from examination. By this Amendment, claims 1-6 have been amended to clarify the claimed subject matter, new claims 28-35 have been added, and withdrawn claims 7-27 have been canceled, without disclaimer of or prejudice to applicant's right to pursue them in one or more divisional applications. Accordingly, claims 1-6 and 28-35 are now pending, with claim 1 being the sole pending claim in independent form.

Claims 1, 2 and 4-6 were objected to as having informalities.

In response, the claims have been amended to clarify the claimed subject matter.

Withdrawal of the objection to the claims is respectfully requested.

Claims 1-4 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(a) as purportedly anticipated by Katsuyama '956 (US 2003/0052956 A1). Claim 5 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as purportedly unpatentable over Katsuyama '956 in view of U.S. Patent No. 4,728,963 to Rasmussen et al. Claim 6 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as purportedly unpatentable over Katsuyama '956 in view of Rasmussen et al and further in view of Hwang (US 2003/0035040 A1).

Applicant has carefully considered the Examiner's comments and the cited art, and respectfully submits that independent claim 1 of the present application is patentable over the cited art, for at least the following reasons.

The present application relates to an image forming apparatus having a compact front-operable configuration, including a front face slanted such that the bottom side thereof recedes in a particular direction towards a back face of the image forming apparatus, and a paper discharge

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tray and a paper feed tray both disposed at a lower portion of the front face, the paper discharge tray and paper feed tray both protruding in an opposite direction to the particular direction. Such a configuration allows a substantially flat top face to be provided, while enough space for the feeding and discharging of paper can also be obtained.

Katsuyama '956 is a publication (on March 20, 2003) of commonly assigned application no. 10/244,529, filed September 17, 2002 (now U.S. Patent No. 6,848,685, February 1, 2005). Katsuyama '956 proposes a compact printer for personal use wherein the user manually opens and closes a sheet inlet and a sheet outlet, and is configured to prevent entry of dust and other impurities into a housing of the printer.

Figs. 2 and 4 of Katsuyama '956, which were cited in the Office Action, are reproduced below:

FIG. 2

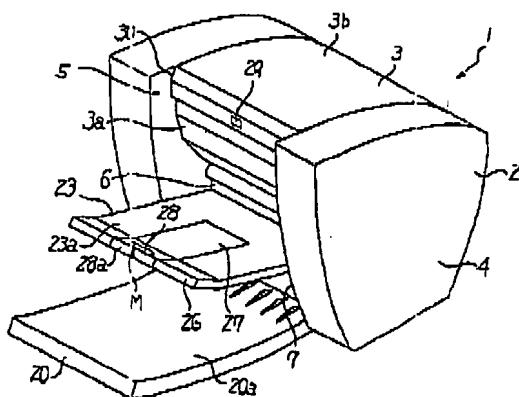
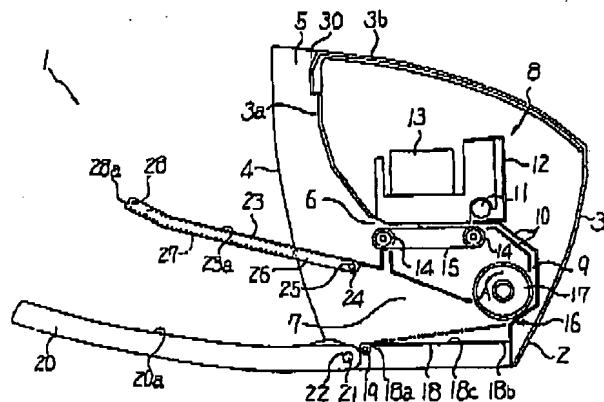


FIG. 4



As shown in Figs. 2 and 4 of Katsuyama '956, a printer 1 includes a housing 2 made up of a main housing 3 and side covers 4 mounted on both sides of the main housing 3 in the main scanning direction, with the front end of the main housing 3 implementing an upright wall 3a.

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The upright wall 3a is formed with a sheet outlet 6 and a sheet inlet 7, both of which are elongate in the horizontal direction. The sheet outlet 6 provides communication between the inside and the outside of the housing 2, and the sheet inlet 7 is positioned below the sheet outlet 6. The operator of the printer can replace an ink cartridge inside the printer housing by opening a top cover 3b, which closes the top of the main housing 3.

However, the top cover 3b of the printer proposed in Katsuyama '956, contrary to the contention in the Office Action, is not a substantially flat top face (claim 1 of the present application), but rather is rounded and is slanted such that its front portion is higher than its back portion. A user cannot put any objects on the top cover 3b for efficient use of space on and over the printer.

Accordingly, Katsuyama '956 does not anticipate the subject matter of claim 1 of the present application.

Further, pursuant to 35 U.S.C. § 103(c), Katsuyama '956 cannot render the claims of the present application unpatentable under 35 U.S.C. § 103. As pointed out above, Katsuyama '956 is a publication (on March 20, 2003) of commonly assigned application no. 10/244,529, filed September 17, 2002 (now U.S. Patent No. 6,848,685, February 1, 2005). Application no. 10/244,529 and the present application are commonly assigned to Ricoh Company, Ltd., Tokyo, Japan. Further, the present application is a Section 371 national stage of PCT/JP2003/015439, filed December 2, 2003, which claims the priority of Japanese patent applications nos. 2002-351-942, 2003-000036 and 2003-387446, filed December 4, 2002, January 6, 2003 and November 18, 2003, respectively.

Since the March 20, 2003 publication date of Katsuyama '956 is after the December 4, 2002 and January 6, 2003 priority dates of the present application, and Katsuyama '956 and the

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present application are commonly assigned, Katsuyama '956 cannot preclude patentability of the subject matter of the present application unpatentable under 35 U.S.C. § 103.

Rasmussen, as understood by applicant, proposes an inkjet printer including a paper supply tray (12) and a paper collection tray (18) in the front (14) of the printer, with the paper collection tray including a pair of opposed output rails (22) which support a sheet of paper (16c) during printing to permit ink on a sheet of paper (16b) previously printed to dry, and a paper handling mechanism configured to pick off a sheet of paper from a stack of input paper, bring it around paper drive rollers (24) onto a platen (26), where the printing operation, employing a printhead cartridge (32) occurs. Figs. 1 and 2 of Rasmussen are reproduced below.

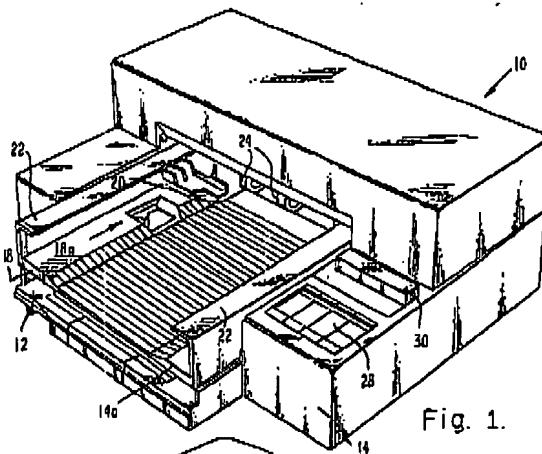


Fig. 1.

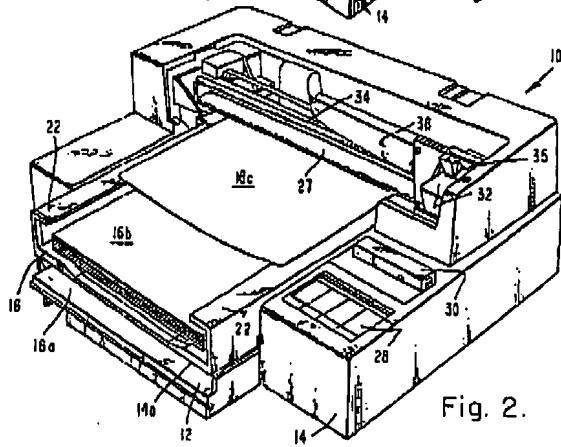


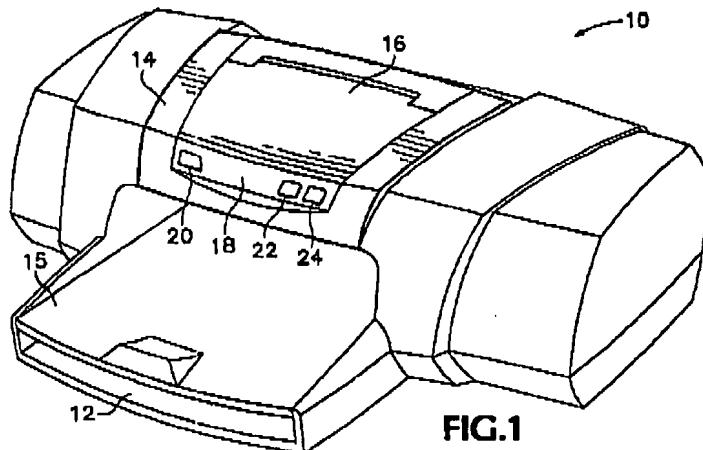
Fig. 2.

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The printer proposed by Rasmussen does not disclose or suggest a front face slanted such that the bottom side thereof recedes in a particular direction towards a back face of the image forming apparatus, as provided by the subject matter of claim 1 of the present application. Such a configuration (that is, claim 1 of the present application) of a slanted front face allows the substantially flat top face to be large enough for a user to put objects thereon for efficient use of space on and/or over the substantially flat top face.

Hwang, as understood by applicant, proposes an ink jet printer 10 that includes a media tray 12 for storing and supplying the media sheets to an internal media handling mechanism, and a top surface 14 that may pivot open to allow access to the ink jet pens and media handling mechanism inside the printer. As a media sheet is printed it is moved from the internal media handling mechanism into an output tray 15. Fig. 1 of Hwang is reproduced below.



Hwang, like Rasmussen, does not disclose or suggest a front face slanted such that the bottom side thereof recedes in a particular direction towards a back face of the image forming apparatus, as provided by the subject matter of claim 1 of the present application.

Accordingly, the combination of Hwang and Rasmussen does not render unpatentable the

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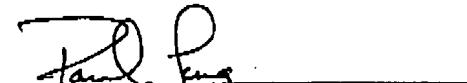
subject matter of claim 1 of the present application.

In view of the remarks hereinabove, Applicant submits that the application is now in condition for allowance. Accordingly, Applicant earnestly solicits the allowance of the application.

If a petition for an extension of time is required to make this response timely, this paper should be considered to be such a petition. The Patent Office is hereby authorized to charge any fees that are required in connection with this amendment and to credit any overpayment to our Deposit Account No. 03-3125.

If a telephone interview could advance the prosecution of this application, the Examiner is respectfully requested to call the undersigned attorney.

Respectfully submitted,



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